

Region 5 Monthly Newsletter

January 2015



January News

Happy New Year! Well, the cold has officially arrived. I hope that you are all safe and warm back at school and happy to see all of your students. I know they are excited to see you!

In this newsletter, you will see a focus on Family and Community Engagement. You may be familiar with Senate Enrolled Act 422. If not, the following link will provide an outline for you

<http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2013/SE/SE0422.1.html>. As educators, we are always striving to find additional ways to involve our parents and community in the challenging and rewarding work we do. With their support, we are able to accomplish so much. The Department of Education has created are some helpful surveys and assessment tools located at <http://www.doe.in.gov/outreach/familyfriendly-schools-program> that you may find useful.

The Department of Assessment has been sending out regular communications about updates and changes. Please be sure to check-in with your District Assessment Coordinator regularly so that you have the most up-to-date communications as quickly as possible.

As I find out information from The Department of Accountability on the status of future changes, I will share that information with you.

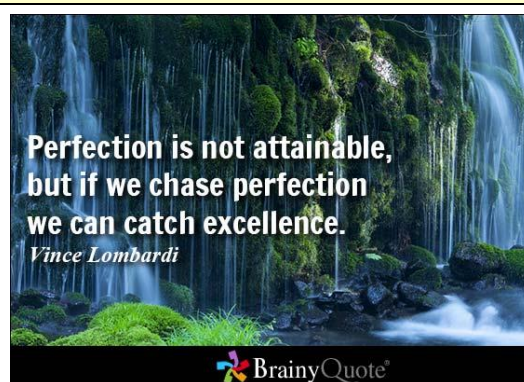
Have a wonderful January. As always, please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
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Assessment Guidance

We are pleased to announce that **Blueprints and Instructional and Assessment Guidance** documents for the Spring 2015 accountability ECA assessments are now posted on the following web page:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/end-course-assessments-ecas>



Family and Community Engagement Act

The IDOE Family and Community Engagement initiative is being rolled out in January 2015. The vision of the FACE initiative is to assist the Division of School Improvement with an intentional approach to family and community engagement. Our mission is to serve all Indiana schools, including Focus and Priority Schools, with improving their family and community engagement initiatives. In addition to identifying and designating applicable schools as “Family Friendly,” we will create and share a statewide framework for Family and Community Engagement.

If you have any questions or in need of additional support in the area of Family and Community Engagement, please contact:

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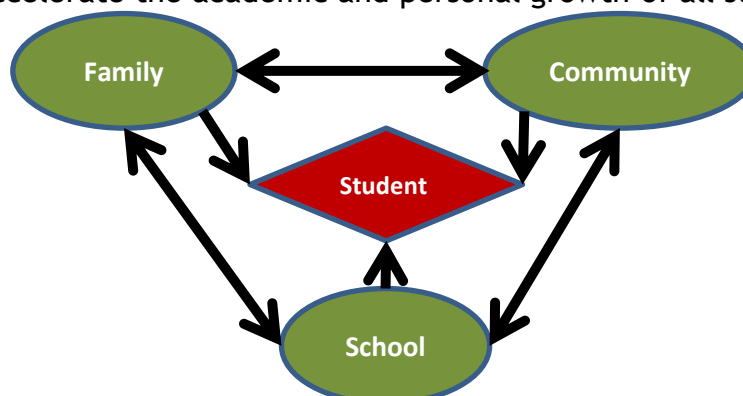
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Family and Community Engagement- Doug Thieme

Being in the business of educating children we are all first to recognize the importance of parent involvement. We believe that if parents are involved this will have a positive academic and behavioral impact which will lead to success. Parent involvement can easily be taken for granted that if they are involved they are engaged at a level that will positively impact the academic achievement levels of the child. We also believe the same when we are able to get community businesses and partners invested in the education we provide the children in our buildings.

This article for this month will focus on the Turnaround Principle 8 -Family and Community Engagement. As a brief reminder to keep ALL of you engaged on this the valuable content of this article you may wonder how the Turnaround Principles apply to your school. Turnaround Principles are not only used as a strategic system to support schools that maybe struggling but more importantly the eight principles are indicators for high performing schools. It is the goal of the Outreach Division of the Indiana Department of Education to promote these Turnaround Principles and to make these known by all schools for this reason.

The foundational aspect of Turnaround Principle 8 is that the school, family, and community are engaged in coordination at a level that will assist in removing all educational barriers for all students. It is important to leverage the power of families, community members, community organizations, and the school as active partners to support the student and remove all barriers to help accelerate the academic and personal growth of all students.



When discussing MEANINGFUL family engagement it is important to note that this is more than having fun evenings of activities that parents and students participate in together. Those are great events that schools should be encouraged to have in building a positive welcoming climate. However, these events tend to allow parents and families to be passively engaged. To engage families is to keep them informed about the academic progress of their student and how this is in comparison to expected learning goals or targets for that grade level. Parents need to know where their student is achieving in relation to the goal or expected outcome. This practice then establishes the high expectation for all students. In this process, parents being informed need to know that they are an active participant in the instructional decisions of their student. Parents in this process can also be informed how they can help their student in progressing towards the learning goals or student outcomes. A few of the most traditional ways parents are informed of student progress are through regularly scheduled conferences, progress reports, and report cards. Schools are encouraged to find creative ways to engage families and find every opportunity to discuss with them their student and learning goals. When initiating this contact with parents it is important to make this a positive impact that the education of the child is a team effort. It is all too easy to take this opportunity to inform the parent what they are not doing which will negatively impact parental engagement and support.

Another component of family engagement is to encourage and actively recruit families to provide input on school decisions. Families should be provided opportunities to garner input from families through PTOs, Parent Councils, School Leadership Councils, or Town halls. School leaders can use this valuable feedback to make decisions accordingly.

Lastly when discussing family engagement it is important to find multiple and various ways to keep parents informed. With the increase of technology in schools, student information systems have become very popular. It is important not to neglect that the school community needs to provide support to families in how to access this very valuable real-time information. This may not only be how to access their student's personal data but the school community may also need to provide a way or means for parents to have access to technology to access the student information system.

Community engagement is the next and final component of this principle. It is important for schools to cultivate and build relationships with community partners and organizations that can provide support in identified needs of families and students. There are many groups that have services to offer and are willing to host, fund and provide them, but they do not know how to help or have not been engaged. Many times the community organizations are willing to establish and coordinate the service they provide with the school building. We know as educators that all students can achieve to meet high expectations when their emotional, behavioral, physical, and academic needs are met. These critical community partnerships will build a network of services that can be provided to families and students that schools cannot otherwise provide alone with the goal of removing or reducing barriers to the academic achievement and personal growth of students.

As outlined in this article it has covered the surface of family and community engagement based on Turnaround Principle 8. There are many resources available on the [Outreach Website](#) to support schools that have needs in this area. Schools that feel they have strong Family and Community Engagement programs in place are encouraged to explore the possibility of applying for the designation of being a Family Friendly Schools program this coming Fall. The information, application, and materials can be found at this [location](#).